

**U.S. Department of Justice**  
***Eastern District of Arkansas***

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**LEADER OF LARGE-SCALE DRUG CONSPIRACY SENTENCED**

**Little Rock, Arkansas** - Bud Cummins, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Arkansas, announced today that United States District Judge George Howard, Jr. sentenced Rachel Juvera to 121 months imprisonment for conspiracy to distribute more than 1,000 kilograms of marijuana, in violation of Title 21, United States Code, Section 841(a)(1). Her husband, Armando Juvera, was also sentenced to 60 months for his role in the marijuana distribution organization.

This case was the result of an extensive three year Organized Crime and Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) investigation by the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). According to the Fifth Superseding Indictment, beginning in 1997, the Juveras of Chula Vista, California, operated a large-scale family drug trafficking organization. The organization obtained marijuana from Mexico and then distributed it throughout the United States, including Arkansas, Illinois, North Carolina and Oregon. Federal agents working the case developed sources well-placed within the organization and were able to keep close tabs on the drug trafficking activities. Agents also developed cooperating witnesses by arrests throughout the United States of various individuals connected to the organization.

U.S. Attorney Bud Cummins stated that the Juvera's were successful for more than twenty-five years. The Juveras' success was, at least in part, because they typically shipped smaller quantities of marijuana. Thus, if a load was stopped on the highway by police, it would usually not be an amount that would generate substantial investigation. However, once the Juveras caught the attention of the federal authorities, ICE and DEA agents traced marijuana seizures to the Juveras that included 400 pounds in Arkansas in February 1997; 1,250 pounds in Mississippi in November 1999; 240 pounds in Oklahoma in September 2003; 138 pounds in California in December 2004; 165 pounds in Texas in January 2004; 270 pounds in Kansas and 101 pounds in New Mexico in April 2004; and 80 pounds in Arkansas in May 2005. Agents also linked numerous seizures of marijuana at the San Ysidro Port of Entry to the Juvera drug smuggling organization.

In February 2005, DEA and ICE agents from Little Rock and California executed a search warrant at the Juvera residence at 558 Wisteria in Chula Vista, California. During the

search, agents arrested Armando Juvera, and two co-defendants. At the residence agents seized 36 pounds of marijuana and documents showing the vast extent of drug trafficking by the Juvera family. Cummins said federal agents also found the portrait of Jesus Malverde, who some believe is the patron saint of smugglers. “Malverde could not protect the Juveras from the tireless investigative work by ICE and DEA agents that ultimately exposed these drug smugglers.”

Rachel Juvera was not at the residence at the time of the February 2005, search. She remained a fugitive until ICE agents, in conjunction with the Mexican Federal Police, arrested her in Mexico in September 2005. Two remaining defendants, Benito Naito-Gastelum and Gloria Cardenas-Kennedy, are believed to play leadership roles in the conspiracy. Naito-Gastelum was recently arrested by Mexican authorities and the United States Attorney’s Office is seeking his extradition. Cardenas-Kennedy remains a fugitive and is also believed to be in Mexico.

Investigation of the Juvera organization has resulted in the conviction of 22 individuals in five separate cases. From events arising out of this drug conspiracy, the U.S. Attorney’s Office is also prosecuting a capital case involving three defendants, Vertis Clay, Calvin Stovall, and Darryl Walker. In this related case, prosecutors allege that the Juveras were the source of marijuana for a drug trafficking organization in Pine Bluff. During the course of the Pine Bluff organization’s activities, an individual was tortured and murdered. Therefore, the Department of Justice is seeking the death penalty against Vertis Clay in that related case.

In addition to DEA and ICE, other federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies have assisted in this case including: the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Criminal Investigation (CI), the Arkansas State Police, the Arkansas Highway Police, the Pine Bluff Police Department, and the Sherwood Police Department.